

CIPR PRide Awards 2009

Category 19: Best website or microsite

CENTRO

At the click of a mouse, West Midlands' schoolchildren have discovered how to beat climate change and congestion by using public transport.

In January 2009, www.letzgogreen.org celebrated its first year of being 'live' on the internet. www.letzgogreen.org is a revolutionary website initiated by Centro's Marketing Department and Sustainable Travel Team, with the support of local transport providers and councils. It is aimed at teaching children to be streetwise and use buses, trains and trams, walk or cycle instead of going by car and raises awareness of the importance of using public transport to the next generation of commuters at an early age.

Once logged on, youngsters can read interactive stories and comic books with colourful cartoon characters and take part in games and puzzles. Through fun activities, they learn the importance of issues such as climate change, congestion and health.

Uniquely, letzgogreen.org includes the only free internet public transport resource centre for teachers in the UK, providing pages that can be used on interactive whiteboards, downloadable lesson plans and worksheets.

Since its launch in January 2008, the website has already received 138,065 hits in Key Stage 1 and 2 modules alone and through letzgogreen.org's interactive content and teaching modules, children build confidence and have a dynamic interest in using public transport that they can develop as they get older.

letzgogreen.org was introduced in schools on a trial basis and proved highly suitable for both teacher and pupil needs. It is now taken to schools and delivered on a workshop basis utilising the website on an interactive whiteboard or in a computer suite. The website has now enabled the Sustainable Travel Team to double the number of workshops delivered to primary schools across the West Midlands from 70 to 147.

It also allows staff and pupils to use the website outside of the classroom either at home or during lesson planning and is much more effective in engaging children than previous workshops.

Widespread consultation took place with schools prior to the launch so that it met their requirements and a feedback function on the website lets staff respond with comments and further ideas for development. Sustainable Travel Team staff have been fully trained by the project's lead officer and Local Authority School Travel Advisers have also been trained and now promote it to schools they work with.

The website includes individual zones for children, teachers and parents. It has been designed to link in to the National Curriculum and school travel plans for both Key Stages 1 and 2, with elements tailored for each.

By visiting the website, primary school children in Birmingham, Coventry, Dudley, Sandwell, Solihull, Walsall and Wolverhampton can learn why it's good to use public transport, walk or cycle, instead of travelling by car.

The website raises awareness of the importance of using public transport and other sustainable modes of travel, to the next generation of commuters, at an early age. Children are encouraged to examine what is appropriate behaviour while using public transport, look at health and safety provisions which affect a public transport system and roads, and investigate the environmental benefits of using sustainable travel modes across the West Midlands.

Students can access a wealth of information and data covering amongst other topics:

- car ownership in the West Midlands
- CO2 emissions by different forms of transport
- numbers of passengers travelling by different forms of transport
- ways of encouraging travel by sustainable transport instead of the car
- the role of Centro in improving the quality of local bus services and customer service

For launch in March 2009, Future Travel is an online resource supporting the teaching of Key Stage 3 Geography, Science and Citizenship. It has been developed for older pupils along a 'Future Travel' theme, focussing on 'Gridlock or Growth, Congestion and Climate Change Issues' which fits into the Geography curriculum

The program introduces Network West Midlands and the environmental benefits of sustainable travel through video, photographs, statistics and text. Photographs of transport and local attractions are available for students to download and use in their own research projects and they can investigate the issues faced by the transport system in the West Midlands, and the role of sustainable travel in reducing levels of congestion.

All the classroom information ties in to several aspects of the national curriculum including Numeracy, Literacy, ICT, Geography, Citizenship, Art and Design, and Science. letzgogreen.org is still in its early stages, but website hits are increasing month-on-month and a major marketing campaign is about to be implemented, with the site being extended.

Centro developed letzgogreen.org with Resources for Learning, a company that specialises in the development of educational websites by working with teachers. Further developments include five additional stories, magazines and lesson plans to each of the Key Stage 1 and 2 resources.

Benefits for pupils

- Fun, exciting and educational
- Can be used at home and school
- Learn key skills such as telling the time and using money
- Learn about responsible behaviour
- Games and fun activities
- Provide information on how they can use public transport safely
- Prepare for transition between primary and secondary school

Benefits for schools

- Teachers resource area
- Downloadable lesson plans
- Downloadable worksheets
- Downloadable certificates to track achievement
- Compatible with interactive whiteboards
- Can be used as a class or independent activity
- Linked to the National Curriculum
- Educates pupils on sustainable transport issues